

AND WHY NOT? NO. 1323

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 12, 1876,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And He said unto the disciples, The days will come when you shall desire
to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you shall not see it”
Luke 17:22. (NKJV)*

WHILE the Lord was yet on earth the days of the Son of man were but lightly esteemed. The Pharisees spoke of them with a sneer and demanded when the kingdom of God should come. As much as to say, “Is this the coming of your promised kingdom? Are these fishermen and peasants your courtiers? Are these the days for which prophets and kings waited so long?” “Yes,” Jesus tells them, “these are the very days. The kingdom of God is set up within men’s hearts and is among you even now. And the time will come when you will wish for these days back again. And even those who best appreciate them, shall, before long, confess that they thought too little of them, and sigh in their hearts for their return.” This suggests the remark that *we are bad judges of our present experiences*. Those days of which we think very little while they were passing over us come, by-and-by, to be remembered with great regret. Have you not found it so in your own lives? Has it not been so that the very experience which caused you anxiety while you were passing through it was, afterwards, appeared to be so excellent in your eyes that you have wished to have it back again? I have said unto my soul sometimes, “How heavy you are! How are you bowed down! How little do you rejoice in the Lord! It is sad that you should fall into this condition.” The period of heaviness has passed away and then I have chided my heart in another way, saying, “Soul, how careless and unfeeling you are! It were better for you if you were as heavy, now, as you were a little while ago, for then you were in earnest—then you were driven to mighty and prevailing prayer—but now you are steeped in lethargy! You have lost your fervency and are scarcely alive at all!” This stage has gone by and I have again had to look back and feel that when I thought myself insensible I was really very spiritual and sensitive—and that my fears of falling into carnal ease were sure proofs that I was carefully upon the watch. Thus are we delivered from carnal security by being made to see more beauty in past experiences than in those now passing over us. Holy anxiety, when it broods over us, is often mistaken for unbelief. Full assurance is suspected to be presumption and joy is doubted and stinted for fear it should be pride and self-deception! When our spiritual spring is with us, we are fearful of its March winds and April showers. But when it is gone and we are parched with summer heat, we wish we had the winds and showers back again. So, too, when autumn comes, we mistake ripening for decaying and mournfully wish the roses of summer would return—while all through winter we are sighing for those summer hours we once enjoyed and those mellow autumn fruits which were so sweet to our taste. Thus, brothers and sisters, we continue, if we permit ourselves to do so, to judge each state in which we have been to be better than that in which we are, and to shed useless tears of regret over times and seasons which are gone past recall! While they are with us, we see their deficiencies. When they are gone, we remember only their excellences. It would be wiser if we took each time and season, and state and experience, while yet it was on the wing, turned it to the best account for God’s glory and rejoiced in it! It will be time, enough, to mourn when it is gone from us. After all, each season has its fruits and it would be a pity to wither them with idle regrets. Let us turn to good account the old worldling’s motto, and live while we live. Let us live one day at a time, enjoy the present good and leave yesterday with our pardoning God. The days of the Son of man, of which the apostles thought comparatively little, they afterwards sighed for. And these present days, of which we are complaining, may yet come to be regarded as among the choicest portions of our lives.

Our second remark is a very commonplace one, you have heard it a thousand times—we seldom value our mercies till we lose them. We best appreciate their excellence when we have to deplore their absence. This has been so often said that I wish it did not continue to be true, for it is an atrocious piece of folly that, after all, we should be obliged to lose our blessings in order to learn gratitude for them! Are we such dolts that we never shall know better than this? Such conduct is only worthy of the idiot or the insane! Can we not put away such childishness and thus remove one occasion for our sorrows? Would it not be well to resolve, in God's strength, to estimate the blessing while we have it, and so to use it that when it is gone we may remember that we turned it to the best account for our soul's profit, for the benefit of others, and for God's glory? We cannot call back the sun and lengthen out these shortening days, but we can, at least, so live that every flying hour shall carry with it, tidings of our zealous industry in our Master's cause. Come, dear brothers and sisters, whatever is our present condition is good, let us bless God for it now and use at once its peculiar opportunities and advantages, lest h

This morning, as the Holy Spirit may help me, I intend to use the text, first, by explaining *its immediate interpretation*; then, secondly, by giving *an interpretation adapted to believers at the present day*; and then, thirdly, by urging home *another interpretation*, much after the same import, *adapted to unbelievers at this time*.

I. First, let us consider THE IMMEDIATE INTERPRETATION of our text. The first meaning ought always to have the preference in every discourse. We must always mind the mind of the Spirit. Did not our Savior mean two things, first, that the day would come in which His disciples would look back regretfully upon the past, wishing that they could have Him walking among them again? And, secondly, that they would anxiously look forward to the future, wishing that they might, if it were only for one day, behold Him in His glory, enthroned in power, as He shall be in the latter days, when He shall stand a second time upon the earth? Looking either backward or forward, the one thing they sighed for was to have their Lord personally and visibly with them.

First, then, I say, our Lord meant *that they would look back regretfully upon the days when He was with them*. In a short time His words were true enough, for sorrows came thick and threefold. At first they began to preach with uncommon vigor and the Spirit of God was upon them so that thousands were converted in a single day. Then they saw how expedient it was that their Lord should go and that the Spirit should be given. Persecution, however, soon arose and they were scattered abroad. And many of them, doubtless, mourned those quieter days when their Lord's presence shielded them. Still, in all their scattering, the power of the Spirit rested upon them and they increased and multiplied—and the joy of the Lord was their strength. But by-and-by the love of many waxed cold and their first zeal declined. Persecution increased in its intensity and the timid shrank away from them. Evildoers and evil teachers came into the church. Heresies and schisms began to divide the body of Christ and dark days of lukewarmness and half-heartedness covered them. In such circumstances many and many a time did the true servant of Christ say, "O for an hour with the Lord Jesus! O for one of the days of the Son of man, when the arm of the Lord was revealed among us! O that we might go to Him and tell Him all our problems and ask his guidance and entreat Him to put forth His power!" I can imagine that all the first generation, and the next, and the next, after our Lord had ascended, had often upon their lips the sigh, "Would to God we could see one of the days of the Son of man! Oh, where is He that trod the sea and made the waves of the lake of Galilee lie still at His feet? Oh, where is He that chased the demons and met our foes at every point?" They must often have felt a strong desire to see one of those grand days of miracles when even the devils were subject to them. It has often occurred to us to desire the same. Though it is now 1,800 years ago and more since the Lord went into His glory and though He has given us the blessed Spirit to abide with us in His place, yet we have fondly wished, but wished in vain, that we could, for one day, at least, see Him healing the sick and raising the dead! See here, the scoffers tell us that God is dead, or that if there is a God, He has no influence in this world, but has laid aside His powers and handed it over to certain rigid laws with which He has nothing to do. Oh, if we could have the Incarnate God among us but for a day to work His wonders of grace, to feed the hungry, to open blind eyes, to unstop deaf ears, to make the lame man leap like a rabbit and cause the tongue of the dumb to sing! Have you not desired it? Your desire will not be gratified. "You shall not see it." It would not be of

much service if you *did* see it. It could only happen in *one* place upon any *one* day and you who already believe would be confirmed by what you saw, but not so unbelievers. We should only have to begin a new battle with infidels, who would as readily deny that which happened today as that which happened almost 2,000 years ago! Only those who saw the miracle would ever believe that it occurred and a large proportion of these would begin to say, "This was probably done by sleight of hand," or they would ascribe it to magnetism, or electricity, or some newly-discovered force. Miracles will not convince when men are resolved to disbelieve! Faith is not born of sight, nor can it be nourished by it. It is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit—and we err if we believe that even Christ's bodily presence and the repetition of His miracles would be of any value! He who believes not Moses and the prophets, neither would he believe though he were to be dazzled with miracles! The kind of faith which merely outward signs would produce would not be the faith of God's elect.

Then, too, we have been wearied with fierce disputing upon this doctrine and upon that, and one has said, "This is the Master's mind," and another has said, "No." One teacher has denounced his fellow and has been answered by an excommunication from his opponent. In these controversies have we not wished that we could go to Jesus with all questions and say, "Master, give us one infallible word, untie or cut these knots with one word of Your lips. Then will Your poor church be no longer disquieted with debates." Brothers and sisters, Jesus is not here! Instead of His presence, we have that of His Spirit, and though you may wish for His bodily presence, it would not be of much service to you in the matter for which you desire it, for, strange to say, if our Lord were to speak again, men would begin to dispute tomorrow about what He meant today, even as they now quarrel over His words of 1,800 years ago! His language in this Book is already so very plain that I do not know, if He were to speak again, that He could speak more clearly than He has done. At any rate, His hearers said of Him, in the days of His sojourn here, "Never man spoke like this man," and I suppose if He were to speak again, He would not improve upon what He has already spoken, nor would He teach us much more. For us to hear Him speaking, again, would only be to create a new opportunity for a fresh set of controversies—and we should have among us the Old School Christians, and the Christians of the later revelation, which would double the confusion and make bad worse! No, my brethren, we need the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as to what our Lord has already spoken, but it is idle to wish that He would teach among us again. We ignorantly desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, but divine providence kindly denies us our wish and tells us plainly, "You shall not see it."

"Ah," but you have said, "Only to see our blessed Lord once! Just to cast eyes upon His beloved person for a moment! To hear but once the tones of His heart-moving voice! Oh, if I might but once unloose His sandals or kiss His feet, how would my spirit feel confidence and joy all her days! How would faith grow if she could but have a little actual and intimate communion with the Well-beloved! I would gladly give all that I have for one glance of His eyes." I know you have indulged that thought, for I have often had it myself, but dear brothers and sisters, if the Lord Jesus were to come upon earth, I am not sure that you could have much of His company, because there are so many of His people—and each one would wish to entertain Him. He could, as a man, be but in one place at one time, and you might get to see Him, perhaps, once in the year, but what would you do all the rest of the year, when you might not be able to hear His voice because He would be in America or in Australia? How much better off would you be? Surely none at all! It is far better for you to continue to say, "Whom not having seen we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The fact is, brothers and sisters, the great battle of the Lord has to be fought out upon the lines of *faith* and, for us to see with our eyes would spoil it all. That sight of the eyes and hearing with the ears which we desire, just to break the monotony of the walk of faith, would, in fact, spoil it all, and amount to a virtual defeat. Our God is saying to us, "My Children, can you trust Me? Can you obtain the blessing of those who have not seen and yet have believed? Abraham trusted Me, but he heard Me speak with an audible voice. Moses trusted Me, but he saw My wonders in Egypt and in the wilderness. Can you trust Me without voice or miracle?" The Lord has spoken to us by His Son, who is better than all voices or wonders! Can we now believe Him? Is the spiritual life within us strong enough to believe the Lord without any further evidence? Can we honor Him by resting upon His sure word without seeing signs or

wonders? We, upon whom the ends of the earth have come, are set to work out the great problem of defeating the powers of darkness and walking throughout an entire life by simple, undiluted faith—can we accomplish it? By the Spirit's help we can! I beseech you, brothers and sisters, say unto the Lord, "Lord, increase our faith, and grant that we may so trust You that from now on we may neither ask for sight nor sound, nor anything else that would prevent our resting on Your bare word." You have fallen into that mistaken condition and wished for one of the days of the Son of man, but you shall not have it, for your heavenly Father has reserved some better thing for you, that you, to the end, with simple, unalloyed faith in Him, should endure and conquer through the blood and the power of your unseen Redeemer, who is really with you, though you see Him not!

Our second reading of the text was that these disciples would *look forward, sometimes, with anxious expectation*. "If we cannot go back," they would say, "Oh that He would hurry on and quickly bring us the predicted era of triumph and joy! Oh for just one day of the glory of the Son of man!" They would gladly have a drop of the glory before the shower of the millennium. They would hear one blast of His trumpet before it shall sound to raise the dead and see one flash of the eternal morning before whose dawning the shadows shall forever flee. Have you not, sometimes, desired the same? I know when I stood at the foot of the so-called Holy Staircase at Rome and saw the poor deluded creatures crawling up and down the steps, in hopes of obtaining remission of sins by their prayers, I wished the Lord would flash forth His power a moment upon those horrible priests who had degraded their people by such superstition! One of the days of the Son of man with the scourge of small cords would effect a great change in the Church of Rome, but one of the days of the Son of man with the iron rod would be better, for there are plenty of potter's vessels around the Vatican that need dashing to shivers! Our indignation would anticipate the judgment and put a speedy end to antichrist. We long to see the millstone dashed into the flood from the angel's hand, never to rise again! In all this indignant impatience there is much that needs repressing. Our Lord says to us, "My Children, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come." We know not what spirit we are of, for in reality we are wanting to give up the battle on the present lines and see it fought out in another way! Or, in other words, we consent to a defeat, so far as faith goes, and would console ourselves with victory obtained in another manner.

Suppose we wish for one of the days of the Son of man to break down the idols of the heathen and the images of the Papists—to overthrow all systems of error and to establish straight away, by force of omnipotence the kingdom of Christ? Now, if our wish could be granted, what would it all amount to? It would only manifest what is clear enough, already, namely, the power of God in the world of *matter*! But it would not prove His greatness in the moral and the *spiritual* worlds. If you will think of it, awhile, you will see that the omnipotence of God is not the question. It is clear that any act of power can be performed by the Lord at once. He could, beyond all doubt, in a moment, confound His enemies and utterly destroy their errors by crushing the advocates of them. But that is not the point. The question is—can the force of love and truth by the gospel of Jesus win men's hearts? Can Christ, in His people, conquer sin, falsehood and hatred by purely *spiritual* means? Can sinful creatures, such as we are, continue faithful to God under temptation and allurements? Will God, by the feeble instrumentality of men and women living and teaching the gospel of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is a purely *spiritual* power, be able to break down the works of Satan, abolish the false gods, scatter infidelity and antichrist—and establish the kingdom of grace, peace and righteousness? Do you not see, brothers and sisters, that to invoke the interference of mere power is to spoil the experiment? The glory of the latter days befits the period of triumph, but not the time of conflict! To snatch from the future a day of its splendors would be to alter the conditions of the great fight and so to accept a defeat! The result is safe enough! The battle is the Lord's and He will win, and therefore, do not let us give way to these misplaced pipedreams and longings.

"Ah," says one, "I wish He would come, now, and divide the sheep from the goats." Why? Are not the sinners better among the saints for a while, that the gospel may the more easily reach them? Remember, also, that the farmer would not have the tares divided from the wheat till the harvest came. "Oh, but we wish the Lord would come and put an end to sin." Is it not better that His long-suffering should patiently wait, calling men to repentance and culling out His elect from the sons of men through-

out many a generation? The waiting is dreary to *you*, but it is not long nor dreary to His infinite patience. “Oh, but this delay is tedious, and infidels are demanding, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’” brothers and sisters, of what consequence is it what unbelievers say? Are heaven’s affairs to be arranged to meet their foolishness? “He that sits in the heavens does laugh; the Lord does have them in derision.” Would it not be better for you, also, to scorn their scorning? Who are they that we should be afraid of their reviling? “Ah,” you say, “but error has so long prevailed and it grows worse and worse.” What if it does? It shall still be overruled for the Lord’s glory! God is still on the throne. He is in no hurry. Remember the infinite leisure of the Eternal! What would a million, million ages be to Him? Truly He comes *quickly*, but you must not read that, “quickly,” after *your* rendering, for, “quickly,” with Him may be slowly enough for us. We cannot measure the paces of the Infinite, for the whole history of man is but a pin’s point to His eternity! Our judgments of Jehovah’s going forth are sure to err—He *walks*, we are told, upon the wings of the wind—He is only walking when He moves as swiftly as the tempest! We may as readily err upon the other side and think Him slow, when in reality, He rides upon a cherub and does fly! A thousand years to Him are as one day, and one day with Him is as a thousand years! No, we will not beseech the Lord, as yet, to divide the sinners from the saints by His infallible voice—we will not expect Him, yet, to say, “Depart, you cursed,” and, “Come, you blessed.” We will not beg Him to display at once His great power and to put down all the principalities of evil with His rod of iron. We will wait and fear not! Faith is now the watchword and the order of the day. Sight is for unbelievers, but patient trust is for the saints. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith. This it is which glorifies God and overthrows the powers of evil! Believe, and so shall you wax valiant in fight and put to flight the armies of the aliens. Believe, and so shall you be established. Ask not to see, for sight is wisely denied you. Heaven will be the brighter and eternity the more glorious because we hope for what we see not, and do with patience wait for it.

II. Secondly, I am going to give, with much solemn earnestness, AN ADAPTED INTERPRETATION SUITABLE TO BELIEVERS AT THIS PRESENT MOMENT. “The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you shall not see it.” That is to say, first, I call our *days of holy fellowship with Jesus* days of the Son of man. And these may pass away to our deep sorrow. We have known days when our faith in Christ has been strong and real and our hearts have drawn very near to Him. Our ears have not heard Him speak and yet He has spoken into our soul. Our eyes have not seen Him and yet our heart has been ravished with His beauties! Oh, the delights, the heavenly joys which we have, then, experienced! Perhaps I speak to some who are experiencing all that bliss at this present time and this has lasted with them for months, perhaps for years. Happy brothers! Happy sisters! To abide in such a state of mind as this! But cast not aside my word of jealous counsel this morning, for I speak in purest love. Take heed lest the day come when you shall desire to have one of these days, again, and not see it! While the beloved is with you, hold Him and do not let Him go. “I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awake my love until He pleases.” Remember, the Lord Jesus is a jealous Savior. He will depart if He finds you love any earthly thing more than Himself. He will hide Himself if you begin to pride yourself upon your gifts and think that, surely, you must be someone or else your Lord would not so sweetly reveal Himself to you. He will up and away, also, if you grow cold and negligent, if you despise the means of grace and especially if you decline in private prayer and if His word shall become a dry bone to you. Ah, when the Lord is gone, what a vacuum remains in the soul! It is the best thing I can say for it—I hope that the dreary vacuum will be mourned over and lamented. I hope that the heart will never rest till Jesus returns, but mourn and lament—

*“Where is the blessedness I knew
In union with my Lord?
Where is my heart’s refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?”*

But, beloved, the Lord Jesus need not go and you need not depart! He will abide with you even as He did with the disciples at Emmaus when they constrained Him, if you are but eager for His company. He will pitch His tent with you and be no more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home! Only take

heed that you grieve Him not by sin and He will remain with you till the day breaks and the shadows flee away! And you shall evermore abide in His love and your soul be filled with His joy. But take the kindly warning of this morning, for if you walk loosely, carnally, carelessly, proudly, forgetfully, the days shall come when you shall wish for one of the days of the Son of man and you shall not see it.

Turn the text another way, and learn again. Beloved friends, we have enjoyed days of delightful *fellowship with one another* as well as with our Lord. In the days of the Son of man the disciples were so united in heart that when He had ascended, “they were all with one accord in one place.” Now, it is a great joy for believers when we are all knit together in love and when Christian brotherhood is a matter of fact and not of mere talk. Those are blessed days when the family circle is gracious, when husband and wife and children can speak together of the things of God and there is no division or coldness at home. Those are happy times when your bosom friends are Christ’s bosom friends! When those with whom you talk familiarly hold converse with God, it is no small bliss to go up to the house of God in company with those who keep holy day and to feel that they are of one mind with us in the things of God. Happy is it, also, for us when in the church there is undivided fellowship in prayer, when everybody seems to be in a praying frame of mind—when there is fellowship in praise and eyes glance joy to eyes with a delight that is common because of the Lord’s blessing—when there is fellowship and agreement, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one Spirit is in all and upon all. Those are, indeed, the days of the Son of man! Something like this we have known for years—by His grace these days have been common with us. Brothers and sisters, I hope we shall never know the loss of them, but we easily may. The church may soon allow her fellowship to be broken. And how? Why, some do a world of mischief in this matter by denying that there is any fellowship at all and asserting that love and zeal have died out. Did I hear a brother say that there is very little Christian love nowadays? You are a very good judge of *yourself*, brother, for remember you are speaking for yourself! Another says, “Oh, Christian fellowship. I never see any.” Very likely, brother; again I say you are speaking for yourself and you are the gentleman who is likely to put an end to anything like fellowship in others by your acid spirit and bitter talk. In other ways, also, joyful fellowship may be wounded. Let there be a lack of holy walking, a lack of zeal, or an absence of humility. Let there arise in the church the desire in each one to be the greatest, and let there be small care about the glory of God. Let every man become proud and lifted up and there will soon be an end of Christian fellowship! Do you, dear brother, neglect *private* prayer and become as cold as an iceberg? Wherever you go you will chill other people—and there will be frosts wherever you are found. It is one of the easiest things in the world, when the devil and a knot of prejudiced people agree about it, to spoil the fellowship of the saints! But if we labor that love may be promoted and increased, we shall not have to sigh for the days of the Son of man without finding them, but they shall be continued to us all our lives.

Again, certain times may be aptly called the days of the Son of man when there is *abundant life and power present in the church of God*. We know what this means in this church. I wish we knew it more fully. And we know what the contrast means by having observed many dead and decaying churches. What wretched communities some churches are, where the soul of religion is absent! There is a company of people called a Christian church and a man called a minister who gives them a pious essay every Sunday morning. And they go in and out and go home—and there is an end of the whole thing! Meanwhile their neighbors are perishing for lack of knowledge, but they care nothing. The heathen are dying without Christ, but they heed it not. So much is given to the cause of God as must be paid out of sheer necessity for the maintenance of outward ordinances, but there is no zeal, no consecration, no fervor of love. May we never come down to this! O my beloved, I long to see among us yet more and more abundantly, the spirit of divine life, energetic life, fervent, self-denying life—life which consumes everything to achieve God’s glory! Beloved, you have this and may have more of it, but you may also lose it. Life and power may soon depart! Pastor and people may, alike, sleep in spiritual sloth! And then, at such times, the power, having gone from the church, its energy is no longer felt among the unconverted. A living church grasps with a hundred hands all that comes near to it! It is a mighty soul-saving institution, which, with its far-reaching nets, draws thousands from the sea of death! A living church attracts even the Sabbath-breaker and awakens the infidel. It startles those whom it does not save. When the church is

in this state, her converts are plenteous! Then her teaching and preaching are with power and the truth of God pushes down its adversaries. I have been in my inmost soul bowed before the Lord with awful dread lest these days of the Son of man which we have enjoyed in great measure so long should be taken away from us. I tremble lest we should go to sleep and do nothing! I am alarmed lest there should be no conversions and nobody caring that there should be any and yet, everything seeming to be prosperous. I know that people may be growing more respectable and appearing to be more pious than ever they were, and yet everything may be going backwards! God forbid that the dry rot of indifference should seize upon the heart of the church while she yet appears to be sound and strong! Before that occurs may God be pleased to take me home! Many of you wish the same for yourselves, and well you may, for I trust that we have lived too long in the atmosphere of zeal to be able to endure the cold, frigid condition of a careless church! Yet it would soon be our lot if the Spirit of God were withdrawn. O Holy Spirit, do not depart from us! While His power is with us, brothers and sisters, let us be all at it and always at it, with our whole souls serving the Lord Jesus, and so the cloud of blessing shall be long detained.

Again, “The days will come, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man.” This may be true with regard to *a powerful ministry*, for in the days of the Son of man the gospel was faithfully preached by Christ and His apostles and evangelists. It is not for me to exalt my office, if by that I am supposed to imply any exaltation of myself. But still, I believe that to any church and people, an earnest, plain, simple, faithful ministry is a blessing of untold value. Yet the Lord may readily take it away from His church, or He may paralyze its power so that it may no longer be a blessing. This you well know. The Lord may in anger take the candlestick out of its place and then what would happen? Death may silence the earnest tongue and there will be mourning. He who was a spiritual nursing father and a leader in Israel may be removed, and what then? Are we sufficiently thankful for ministers and pastors while we have them? Are not many of the faithful taken away because they have never been valued as they ought to have been? God’s servants are precious in His sight and He would not have us despise them.

It may be that in this land of ours, in years to come, gospel ministers will become scarce enough. If the popery which now abounds in the Church of England is to go on increasing, the day may come when the voice of Christian ministry will be silenced by law and persecution allowed to rage, for, be not deceived, Rome has not changed her views! Just let her once get power, again, and all the penal laws will be re-enacted and you Protestants who are today flinging away your liberties as dirt cheap, will rue the day in which you allowed the old chains to be fitted upon your wrists. Popery fettered and slew our sires and yet we are making it the national religion! Or if it should never come to be a matter of law that ministries should be silenced, yet they may become fewer and fewer, till a little child may number them. We have none too many faithful ministers of Christ even now, but even these may be called away. The Lord may say to this guilty people, “You did not hear them while you had them. Behold, I will call back My prophets and my messengers. You did not regard them when they cried morning and noon and night unto you, and bade you lay hold on Jesus Christ and be saved and, therefore, behold, I will remove your teachers and take them away from you, and you shall not see their faces anymore.” Are you prepared for this? What are Sabbaths to some Christians I know of but days of bitter disappointment? They go to their places of worship as a matter of duty, but they are not fed, nor comforted, nor stirred up! They gather no divine encouragement! They find no influences in the ministry to help them on their way. Are there not hundreds of unedifying preachers and hundreds of congregations where the Sunday service is a weariness and a misery? God grant you may never have to mourn and lament the happy days in which the gospel was preached among you in simplicity and earnestness! But remember, if they are not valued, they may speedily come to an end. Infirmities of body and frequent sicknesses are not only admonitions to the preacher but to his hearers, also.

III. My last promise was to give A MEANING ADAPTED TO THE UNCONVERTED. To them let me say these two or three things. To some of you, now present, who have heard the gospel for years and yet have rejected it, my text will, one day, become solemnly true. “The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you shall not see it.” Perhaps you will emigrate. You will wander into the backwoods of America or into the bush of Australia where the sound of church bells will never again reach you—where ministers and sermons and services will be unfamiliar things.

Then it may be you will say, “Would to God I had used my Sabbaths while I had them, and that I had constantly heard the gospel when I might.” Or if you should remain in England, yet in a certain time, shorter or longer, you will lie upon the bed of sickness. And it will become clear to all around that it is your last bed and your last sickness. And then you will begin to say, “O God, are there no more Sabbaths for me? No more preaching of the gospel for me? Oh, that I had them over again!” Will you not, then, be willing to give all that you possess to be able, once again, to hear the voice of God’s minister proclaiming pardon through the blood of Jesus? You know you will! At such a time it may be there will be an end to the emotions which you now occasionally feel, for oftentimes God’s arrows stick fast in your conscience and you are wounded. There will be no arrows to wound you, then, with tender wounds of hopeful penitence, but remorse will tear you with poisoned fangs! You will be going down to hell filled with hardness of heart! Emotions, which you aforetime quenched, will not come back. You resisted the Spirit and He will leave you to yourself. And yet there will be enough, perhaps, of conscience left to make you wish that you were again at some of those earnest meetings—that you could, again, feel as once you felt when you were almost persuaded to be a Christian! At such times, it may be, you will look back upon your mother’s entreaties with great remorse and wish she could be at your bedside to love you again and weep over her dying child. “Ah,” you will say, “would God mother could speak to me about Jesus as she once did, but she is gone.” And sisters and friends that once, you said, worried you about religion, you will wish for them, also, but they are gone. They will never worry you anymore with their psalm singing! You will never again be tired, and wearied, and bored with their entreaties! You may be sure about that, for they are in heaven, and you are dying without hope! You are going down to the grave, now, and will never again have to complain of dull Sundays and prosy ministers! You will not be annoyed with street preachers and missionaries. No more warnings, no more entreaties, no more prayers, no more revival services! You are now passing into another region. I wonder whether you will be of a different mind towards these things from what you are now? Will you, then, remember my warnings and call yourselves fools for rejecting them?

I am but giving you an outline of what I wanted to have said, and said with much more earnestness, but I do beseech you think over these things, yourself, in the quiet of your room this afternoon. Within a short time there will be an end to all the opportunities and means of grace you now enjoy. Within a short time, at the very longest, there will be an end of all exhortations, invitations, warnings, entreaties and, it may be when they come to an end you will wish to have them back again. Would it not be far better that you should use them *now*? Escape and find life in Christ, for the lamp of life shall never be kindled, again, to give you a second opportunity! While yet mercy’s gate stands open, enter in and find eternal life, for if it is once shut, it will never move upon its hinges again, and you shall be shut out, world without end! God grant His blessing upon these feeble words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 17:20-37; 18:1-14.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—136, 914, 972.

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